WILDER (B.G.)

The Cerebral fissures of two philosophers ××××

SURGEON GEN'L'S OFFICE,
579.
LIBRARY.

[Extracted from THE JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE NEUROLOGY,
Vol. V, July, 1895.]

THE CEREBRAL FISSURES OF TWO PHILOSOPHERS, CHAUNCEY WRIGHT AND JAMES EDWARD OLIVER.[1]

By BURT G. WILDER.

These men were recognized as superior in character and mental power. They were mathematicians, and thought deeply upon the broadest questions. Wright was more of a writer and general critic; Oliver was more of a teacher of advanced mathematics. The latter was slight in frame and alert in action. The former was large in person and slow of speech and movement.

Wright's brain weighed 1516 grams (53.50 oz.), Oliver's 1416 (49.94). Although above the average of male brains (about 1400 = 49.4), greater weights are not uncommon, even among less intellectual persons. In both, the frontal region is unusually high and wide; the unprecedented squareness of Wright's suggests some *post-mortem* pressure, of which, however, there is no record. In both, the supertemporal fissure is larger than common. Oliver's fissures present several individual variations of the common type, but none comparable with the two rare conditions in Wright's already noted by Dwight (*Amer. Acad. Arts and Sciences, Proceedings*, XIII., 210-215, 1877) and the writer (*Jour. Nerv. and Mental Disease*, XVII., 753-754; *Amer. Neurol. Trans.*, 1890; "Ref. Handbook Med. Sciences," VIII., 158-159, IX., 108). The complete interruption of the central fissure has been observed in a dozen or more cases. The simplicity of the fissures, and the width and flatness of the gyres are paralleled in the Cornell collection only in the much smaller brain of an unknown mulatto (No. 322,

[1] Abstract of a paper presented to the American Neurological Association, June 7, 1895.

Ref. Handbook, VIII., Fig. 4767). Some approach to this condition occurs in Ruloff, a murderer (No. 965), and perhaps in a German shown by Wagner ("Vorstudien," Taf. VI., Fig. 2) after Huschke, ("Schädel, Hirn und Seele," Taf. V., Fig. 2).

If fissural simplicity and gyral width and flatness are family characteristics or correlated with Wright's mental and physical deliberateness, then light may be thrown upon the problem by the conditions to be observed in his blood-relations or in others similarly "slow but sure" in thought, speech and act. Since a close mate for the brain of Chauncey Wright has not been found in that of James Edward Oliver the contemplated full account of it need not longer await the death of other moral and intellectual compeers. Such exceptional cases will always command attention. But all estimates of the extent and significance of their peculiarities will be only provisional until the careful comparison of many *average* brains supplies one or more types or standards. This necessity should be kept in the public mind.